Preserving Digital Public Television
Adopting Standards and Selection Criteria and Defining Structure

Lead: Channel 13/WNET, New York (Educational Broadcasting Corporation).

Participants: WGBH Educational Foundation, Boston; Public Broadcasting Service, Alexandria, Virginia; and New York University.

Goals:
- To plan a long-term preservation repository for America's digital public television programs, by establishing criteria, mechanisms and organizational structures, to adopt and implement national standards and procedures for such a facility.
- To provide a test bed and model repository and functional analysis for the selection and long term operations of such a repository for digitally produced public television programming.

Background: In a relatively rapid period of time, digital technology has radically transformed the nature of television program production -- from a linear, sequential analog process, to a non-linear, random access, totally digital environment. Consequently, standard preservation practices that have served (and continue to serve) to protect analog productions on videotape no longer apply. In its strategic planning for NDIIPP, the Library of Congress recognized this development by paying special attention to the challenges of preserving digital television productions.

While conditions for analog tape preservation are well established, public television has not yet come to terms with the technical standards, content selection criteria, and operating structures necessary for a long-term repository that will preserve the rapidly growing library of digitally produced programs. The public television institutions participating in this project produce and have control of most of the national program content aired on public television, and they are currently working together on several projects related to shifting from analog to digital program distribution protocols. This project builds directly from parallel and related decision-making already underway. NYU, which has particular experience developing models for preserving digital content, will assist the public television organizations in drafting the necessary functional framework for a new repository and will also help test the functionality of a repository model.

Project actions:
- We will conduct a series of facilitated discussions that will focus on basic procedural standards, metadata, and best practices for defining, formatting, cataloging and preserving digital public television program materials. This will include establishing an Advisory Committee to develop criteria for selecting and cataloguing materials for preservation.
- We will complete an inventory of at-risk digital materials held at each public television entity. This will focus on signature public television series produced at Thirteen and WGBH, including NATURE, American Masters, Religion & Ethics Weekly, American Experience, Frontline and NOVA; WLIW's "Visions of ...." ('flyover' programs) and

other materials in High Definition format, as well as materials from smaller stations and independent producers.

- The design for the Universal Preservation Format will be completed and tested.
- We will outline an administrative structure that specifies responsibilities and lines of authority among the partners and other entities (such as the Library of Congress) that will serve as a guide to creating a long-term digital public television repository.
- A model repository will be designed and elements of it tested.